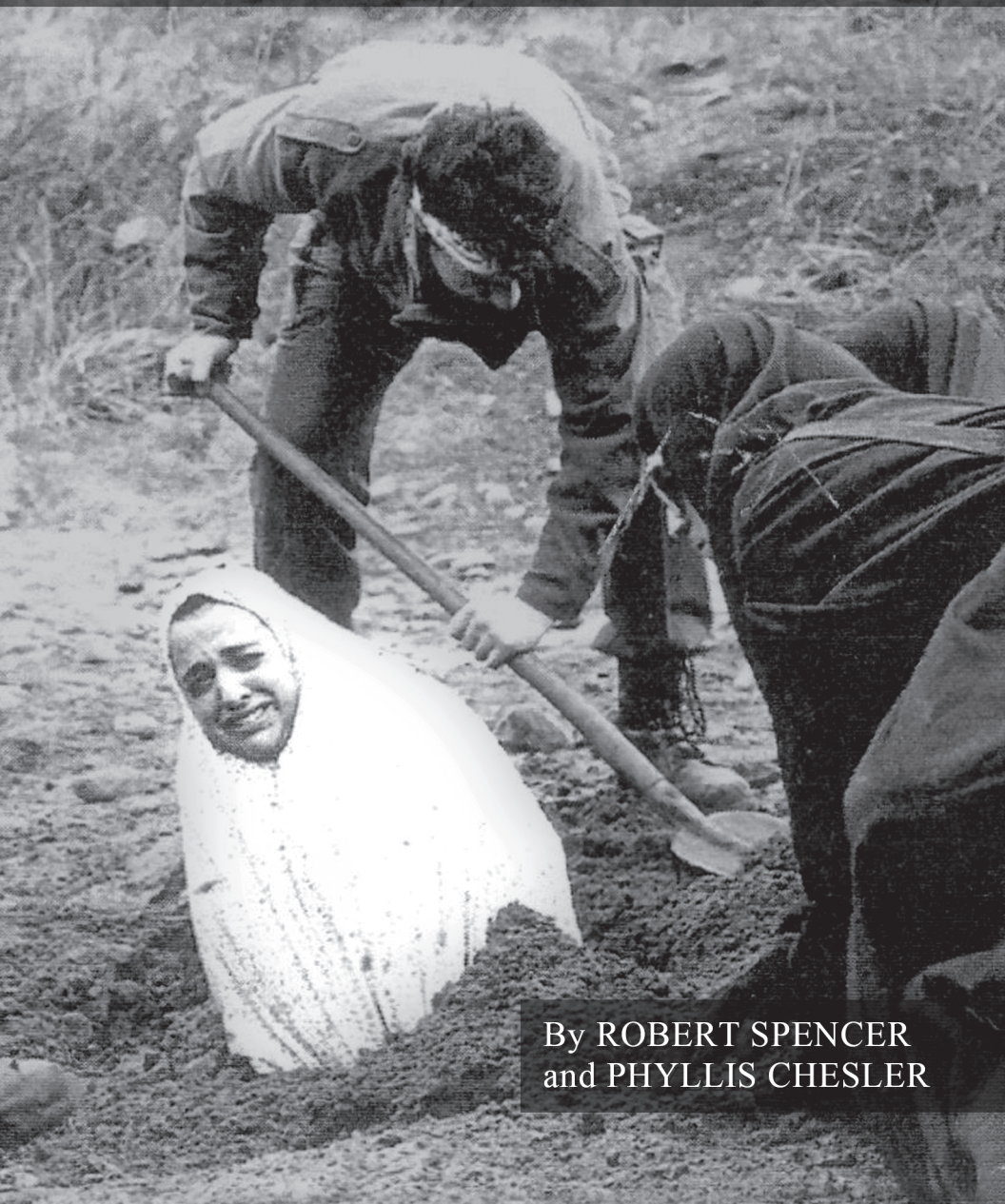
The Violent Oppression Of Women In Islam



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DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- **A Muslim man in Iran cut off his 7-year-old daughter's head because he suspected she had been raped by her uncle?[1]**

- **Many little Muslim girls have their genitals cut out – without anesthesia – in order to destroy their sexuality and make them "pure"? [2]**

- **Daughter and wife beating are routine in the Muslim world. Over 90 percent of Pakistani wives, for instance, have been struck, beaten, or abused sexually – for offenses like cooking an unsatisfactory meal, or for failing to give birth to a male child?[3]**

- **In Iran the legal age for marriage is nine years old, and in an Afghan refugee camp virtually all the girls over second grade were married?[4]**

- **Women who are raped in Muslim countries often end up being punished while the rapist gets off free?[5]**

- **All a man has to do to divorce his wife is say, "I divorce you" three times – and then she is a single woman without support and without her children, who are usually taken by the father?[6]**

These facts show that the war we're fighting isn't just about bombs and hijacked airliners. It's also about the oppression of

women -- often in horrific ways. Nor is this oppression an incidental byproduct of terrorism. The Islamic law – *Sharia* – that terrorists are fighting to impose upon the world mandates institutionalized discrimination against women. Islamic gender apartheid goes far beyond second class citizenship. It is intended to crush and subordinate women.

In Afghanistan, images of women wearing stifling burqas, long gowns that cover their heads, faces, and bodies and seriously limit and impair their vision, became symbolic of life under the Taliban. That radical Muslim regime forbade women to be educated, or even to venture outdoors unaccompanied. Its "Morality"or "Vice and Virtue" police beat them with sticks in the street for trivial offenses. The oppression of women was at the very core of their government and their worldview. And other *jihad* terrorists want to impose a Taliban-style regime wherever they gain power.

For Americans living in a world committed to equality between the sexes, it may seem hard to imagine that such systematic violence against women, sanctioned by religious belief, still exists. Yet across the Muslim world, women endure restrictions on their movements, their marital options, their professional opportunities, and more. In Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere, women cannot vote or hold office. According to Amnesty International, in Saudi Arabia "women...who walk unaccompanied, or are in the company of a man who is neither their husband nor a close relative, are at risk of arrest on suspicion of prostitution or other 'moral' offences."[7] Nor is the oppression of women in Muslim lands some momentary accident of history. According to Saudi feminist Wajeha Al-Huwaider, the lives of many Arab women are similar to those of prisoners. However, the Arab woman is a prisoner in her own home, has committed no crime, was not captured in battle, does not belong to any terrorist army. According to Iranian exile Freidoune Sahebjam, the author of

The Stoning of Soraya M, the Islamic woman's sin is having been born female, which constitutes a "capital offense" in an era of *jihad*.

Men have used the Koran and Islamic tradition and law systematically to create what Egyptian Muslim women's advocate Dr. Nawal El-Saadawi calls "a patriarchal class system in which males dominate females."[8] The presumption, as the Koran says, that "men have a status above women" is pervasive in the Islamic world.[9] And pressure on women to submit to this situation has been present since the founding of Islam. Aisha, the most beloved of the Muslim prophet Muhammad's many wives, admonished women in no uncertain terms to submit: "O womenfolk, if you knew the rights that your husbands have over you, every one of you would wipe the dust from her husband's feet with her face."[10]

The oppression of women sanctioned by the teachings of Islam, and often by its holy book, manifests itself in innumerable ways. Here are some of the most notorious:

Female genital mutilation

In some Islamic countries women face the certainty of female circumcision. Somali women's rights activist and ex-Muslim Ayaan Hirsi Ali notes that in her own homeland virtually every girl has her clitoris excised, sometimes when as young as five years old, and that the practice is always justified in the name of Islam. Uncircumcised girls are told they will become prostitutes but that circumcised girls will be pure. Hirsi Ali describes her own genital mutilation in her book *Infidel*:

> Grandma caught hold of me and gripped my upper body… Two other women held my legs apart. The man, who was probably an itinerant traditional circumciser from the blacksmith

clan, picked up a pair of scissors. With the other hand, he caught hold of the place between my legs and started tweaking it, like Grandma milking a goat...

Then the scissors went down between my legs and the man cut off my inner labia and clitoris. I heard it, like a butcher snipping the fat off a piece of meat. A piercing pain shot up between my legs, indescribable, and I howled. Then came the sewing: the long, blunt needle clumsily pushed into my bleeding outer labia, my loud and anguished protests, Grandma's words of comfort and encouragement… When the sewing was finished, the man cut the thread off with his teeth. That is all I can recall of it.

I must have fallen asleep, for it wasn't until much later that day that I realized that my legs had been tied together, to prevent me from moving to facilitate the formation of a scar. It was dark and my bladder was bursting, but it hurt too much to pee. The sharp pain was still there, and my legs were covered in blood. I was sweating and shivering. It wasn't until the next day that my Grandma could persuade me to pee even a little.

When I just lay still the pain throbbed miserably, but when I urinated the flash of pain was as sharp as when I had been cut.[11]

Genital mutilation is not a specifically Islamic custom. It is also practiced by a number of cultural and religious groups in Africa and South Asia. Among Muslims it's prevalent mainly in Egypt, Sudan, and Somalia, and in other African countries.

Yet despite the fact that there is scant affirmation in Islamic teaching for this horrific practice, the Muslims who do practice it invest genital mutilation with religious significance. One Islamic legal manual states that circumcision is required "for both men and women."[12]

To Sheikh Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, the Grand Imam of

Cairo's al-Azhar, the oldest and most prestigious university in the lands of Islam, female circumcision is "a laudable practice that [does] honor to women."[13] Tantawi is no fringe figure: he is, in the words of a BBC report, "the highest spiritual authority for nearly a billion Sunni Muslims."[14] In endorsing female circumcision he uses this considerable spiritual authority to perpetuate a practice that gives women lifelong pain and blocks their access to sexual fulfillment. But perhaps in the eyes of Sheikh Tantawi the pain is worth the result: most authorities agree that female circumcision is designed to diminish a woman's sexual response, so that she will be less likely to commit adultery.

Daughter-, Sister- and Wife-beating

The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences has determined that over ninety percent of Pakistani wives have been struck, beaten, or abused sexually — for offenses on the order of cooking an unsatisfactory meal or failing to give birth to a male child.[15] Dominating their women by violence is a prerogative Muslim men cling to tenaciously. In Spring 2005, when the East African nation of Chad tried to institute a new family law that would outlaw wife beating, Muslim clerics led resistance to the measure as un-Islamic.[16] Daughter-beating and sister-beating is just as routine as wife-beating and psychologically "seasons" girls to accept such treatment when they are grown.

Why do things like this happen?

Because Islamic clerics worldwide have spoken approvingly of the physical abuse of women.

In 2004, an imam in Spain, Mohammed Kamal Mustafa, was found guilty of "inciting violence on the basis of gender" for his book *Women in Islam*, which discussed the methods and

limits of administering the "physical punishment" of women.[17] Yet for the most part, Muslim men successfully bring this religiously sanctioned violence with them when they immigrate to the West, even to the United States. The prominent American Muslim leader Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, former president of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), has said that "in some cases a husband may use some light disciplinary action in order to correct the moral infraction of his wife…The Koran is very clear on this issue."[18]

Sheikh Yousef Qaradhawi, one of the most respected and influential Islamic clerics in the world, has written: "If the husband senses that feelings of disobedience and rebelliousness are rising against him in his wife, he should try his best to rectify her attitude by kind words, gentle persuasion, and reasoning with her. If this is not helpful, he should sleep apart from her, trying to awaken her agreeable feminine nature so that serenity may be restored, and she may respond to him in a harmonious fashion. If this approach fails, it is permissible for him to beat her lightly with his hands, avoiding her face and other sensitive parts."[19]

Why do they say such things?

Because the permission to beat one's wife is rooted in the Islamic holy book, the Koran, and Islamic tradition.

The Koran says: "Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has [ordained to be] guarded. And as for those women whose ill-will you have reason to fear, admonish them [first]; then leave them alone in bed; then beat them…"[20]

Once told that "women have become emboldened towards

their husbands," the prophet Muhammad "gave permission to beat them."[21] He was unhappy with the women who complained, not with their husbands who committed acts of violence.

Muhammad even struck his favorite wife, Aisha. When he went out one night, Aisha surreptitiously followed him. When he found out what she had done, as she later said, "He struck me on the chest which caused me pain, and then said: Did you think that Allah and His Apostle would deal unjustly with you?"[22]

Easy Divorce (for Men) and Polygamy

A tragic house fire in March 2007 that killed a woman and nine children in a Bronx row house brought to light the practice of Islamic polygamy in the United States. Moussa Magassa, the owner of the house and father of five of the children who were killed, had two wives (both of whom survived the fire). The *New York Times* reported that "immigration to New York and other American cities has soared from places where polygamy is lawful and widespread, especially from West African countries like Mali, where demographic surveys show that 43 percent of women are in polygamous marriages."[23]

Polygamy -- which dehumanizes women and reduces them to the status of commodities, and which has long been outlawed in the United States – becomes part of these immigrants' new lives in the West. Mufti Barkatullah, a senior imam in London, stated in 2004 that there were as many as four thousand polygamous families in Great Britain. Dr. Ghayasuddin Siddiqui of the Muslim Parliament in Britain, gave a lower estimate that still indicated that the practice was widespread: "I've come across one man who has five wives and I would estimate that there are 2,000 men in polygamous marriages in Britain. Of those, 1,000

have multiple wives based here and the other 1,000 have one here and others in different countries." By late 2004 the British government, pondering whether or not to accept what seemed to be inevitable, was even considering legalizing and then taxing polygamy.[24]

If polygamy is rooted in the Islamic holy book ("If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four…"[25]) so too is divorce. A Muslim man is able to divorce any of his wives simply by saying "I divorce you" or "You are divorced."[26] The Koran stipulates only that a man wait for a suitable interval in order to make sure that his wife is not pregnant.[27] If the divorcing couple has any children, they ordinarily go with the father, and he owes his wife no financial or any other kind of support.[28]

Since men can obtain divorces easily, they often divorce capriciously. Sometimes they have second thoughts and want to re-marry. But according to the Koran and Islamic law, if a man has divorced his wife, "he cannot remarry her until she has wedded another man and been divorced by him."[29] This practice is sanctioned by no less an authority than Muhammad himself. A woman came to him who had been divorced by her husband, had married another man, and now wanted to remarry her first husband -- but her second husband was impotent. Muhammad was unyielding, telling her that she could not remarry her first husband "unless you had a complete sexual relation with your present husband and he enjoys a complete sexual relation with you."[30] This statement, enshrined in Islamic law, has given rise to the phenomenon of "temporary husbands." These men "marry" the hapless divorcee for one night of sex so that she can return to her family and the husband who had divorced her in a fit of pique.

Shi'ite Islam, the dominant form of Islam in Iran, allows for another form of "temporary marriage." This is not the same as

the marriage that a divorced woman must enter in order to return to her family. It is rather a provision for men to gain female sexual companionship on a short-term basis. In a temporary marriage, or *mut'a*, the couple signs a marriage agreement that is ordinary in every respect except that it carries a time limit. One tradition of Muhammad stipulates that a temporary marriage "should last for three nights, and if they like to continue, they can do so, and if they want to separate, they can do so."[31] Many such unions, however, don't last as long as three nights.

Temporary wives, who are in effect religiously sanctioned prostitutes, tend to congregate in Shi'ite holy cities, where they can offer companionship to lonely seminarians. One of these holy men recorded his experience in seeking a temporary marriage early in the twentieth century:

> . . . Fortunately, the woman was at home and I married her for a while. When I had quieted my desire and enjoyed the pleasure of the flesh from my lawful income, I gave the woman the *qeran* [a coin] . . . It is obvious that when a *talabeh* [student] has no problem with the lower half of his body he is happier than a king.[32]

Female Sexual and Domestic Slavery

A Saudi named Homaidan Al-Turki was sentenced in September 2006 to 27 years to life in prison for keeping a woman as a slave and sexually abusing her in his home in Colorado. Al-Turki claimed that he was a victim of anti-Muslim bias. He told the judge: "Your honor, I am not here to apologize, for I cannot apologize for things I did not do and for crimes I did not commit. The state has criminalized these basic Muslim behaviors. Attacking traditional Muslim behaviors was the focal point of the prosecution."[33]

The following month, an Egyptian couple living in Southern California received a fine and prison terms, to be followed by deportation, after pleading guilty to holding a ten-year-old girl as a sex slave.[34] And in January 2007, an attaché of the Kuwaiti embassy in Washington and his wife were charged with keeping three Christian domestic workers from India in slave-like conditions in their Virginia home. One of the women remarked: "I believed that I had no choice but to continue working for them even though they beat me and treated me worse than a slave."[35]

Sexual slavery is possible primarily because slavery itself still exists in the Muslim world. Saudi Arabia only abolished slavery in 1962; Yemen and Oman didn't follow suit until 1970. Slavery is openly practiced today in two Muslim countries, Sudan and Mauritania. In line with historical practice, Muslim slavers in the Sudan primarily enslave non-Muslims, and chiefly Christians. According to the Coalition Against Slavery in Mauritania and Sudan (CASMAS), a human rights and abolitionist movement founded in 1995, "The current Khartoum government wants to bring the non-Muslim Black South in line with *Sharia* law, laid down and interpreted by conservative Muslim clergy. The Black animist and Christian South remembers slave raids by Arabs from the north and east and resists Muslim religious rule and the perceived economic, cultural, and religious expansion behind it."[36] Mauritanian anti-slavery campaigner Boubacar Messaoud explains that "it's like having sheep or goats. If a woman is a slave, her descendants are slaves."[37]

Pakistan, meanwhile, is "both a country of origin and a transit country for the trafficking of women for domestic labor, forced marriage and prostitution. This form of slavery is organized by crime networks that span South Asia. Some women, both local and trafficked, are killed if they refuse to earn money in prostitution."[38]

According to attorney Karima Bennoune, from 1992 on, Algerian fundamentalist men have committed a series of "terrorist atrocities" against Algerian women. Bennoune describes the "kidnapping and repeated raping of young girls as sex slaves for armed fundamentalists. The girls are also forced to cook and clean for God's warriors... One 17-year-old girl was repeatedly raped until pregnant. She was kidnapped off the street and held with other young girls, one of whom was shot in the head and killed when she tried to escape."[39] Iraqi *jihad* groups in 2007, according to Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack of the Brookings Institution, "tried to impose Shariah law, brutalized average Iraqis to keep them in line, killed important local leaders and seized young women to marry off to their loyalists."[40] Such behavior was in line with that of Muhammad and the early Muslims, who after battles routinely took as captives the widows of the warriors they had killed.[41]

The Koran directs Muslim men to "marry women of your choice, two or three or four but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or *(a captive) that your right hands possess*…[42] (emphasis added).

Child Marriage

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reports that over half of the girls in Afghanistan and Bangladesh are married before they reach the age of eighteen.[43] In early 2002, researchers in refugee camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan found half the girls married by age thirteen. In an Afghan refugee camp, more than two out of three second-grade girls were either married or engaged, and virtually all the girls who were beyond second grade were already married. One ten-year-old was engaged to a man of sixty.[44] Fifty seven percent of Afghan girls under the age of sixteen, and many as young as nine, are in arranged marriag-

es.[45] In early 2005 a Saudi man in his sixties drew international attention for marrying fifty-eight times; his most recent bride was a 14-year-old he married in the spring of 2004.[46]

Child marriage enjoys the sanction of law and custom. *Time* magazine reported in 2001:

> In Iran the legal age for marriage is nine for girls, fourteen for boys. The law has occasionally been exploited by pedophiles, who marry poor young girls from the provinces, use and then abandon them. In 2000 the Iranian Parliament voted to raise the minimum age for girls to fourteen, but this year, a legislative oversight body dominated by traditional clerics vetoed the move. An attempt by conservatives to abolish Yemen's legal minimum age of fifteen for girls failed, but local experts say it is rarely enforced anyway.[47] The Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran married a ten-year-old girl when he was twenty-eight.[48] Khomeini called marriage to a prepubescent girl "a divine blessing," and advised the faithful: "Do your best to ensure that your daughters do not see their first blood in your house."[49]

In early 2007, severe drought in Afghanistan led some Afghans to sell their daughters into marriages – including girls as young as eight years old – to buy food. One Afghan mother explained: "I need to sell my daughters because of the drought. We don't have enough food and the bride price will enable us to buy food. Three months ago my 15-year-old daughter married."[50] Other girls have been sold to make good on opium debts. An Afghan girl named Saliha recounts: "I was 13 when my father married me off to a 20-year-old man, whose father had given a loan to my parents and they were unable to return the amount or the quantity of opium."[51]With child marriage comes more domestic violence. One scholar tells us, "In Egypt 29 percent of married adolescents have been beaten by their husbands; of those, 41 percent were beaten during pregnancy. A study in Jordan in-

dicated that 26 percent of reported cases of domestic violence were committed against wives under 18."[52]

It is hard for reformers to work against child marriage because it is in accordance with the example of the Muslim prophet Muhammad himself: "The Prophet wrote the (marriage contract) with Aisha while she was six years old and consummated his marriage with her while she was nine years old and she remained with him for nine years (i.e. till his death)."[53] The Koran takes child marriage for granted in its directives about divorce. When speaking about the waiting period required in order to determine if the woman is pregnant, it says: "If you are in doubt concerning those of your wives who have ceased menstruating, know that their waiting period shall be three months. The same shall apply to *those who have not yet menstruated*."[54] (emphasis added). In other words, Allah is here envisioning a scenario in which a pre-pubescent woman is not only married, but being divorced by her husband.

Veiling

In February 2007, Zilla Huma Usman, the Pakistani government's minister for social welfare in Punjab province, was shot dead by a Muslim because her head was uncovered. The murderer, Mohammad Sarwar, declared: "I have no regrets. I just obeyed Allah's commandment. I will kill all those women who do not follow the right path, if I am freed again."[55] In Algeria, "as in Iran, unveiled, educated, independent Algerian women have been seen as military targets and increasingly shot on sight." Attorney Karima Bennoune says: "The men of Algeria are arming, the women of Algeria are veiling themselves. As one woman said: 'Fear is stronger than our will to be free.'"[56] In the Muslim holy city of Mecca in March 2002, fifteen teenage

girls perished in a fire at their school when the Saudi religious police, the *muttawa*, wouldn't let them out of the building. Why? Because in the female-only school environment, they had shed the all-concealing outer garments that Saudi women must wear in the presence of men. They had not put these garments back on before trying to flee from the fire. The *muttawa* preferred that they die rather than transgress Islamic law, and actually battled police and firemen who were trying to open the school's doors and to save the girls.[57] Because of such thinking, all across the Muslim world women endure restrictions on their movements, their marital options, their professional opportunities, and more. The Koran even rules that a son's inheritance should be twice the size of that of a daughter: "Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females." (4:11).

Rape

In March 2007, a 19-year-old Saudi woman received a sentence of 90 lashes. Her crime? A man threatened to tell her father that they were having an affair unless she met him alone. When she did, she was kidnapped and repeatedly raped, after which her brother beat her because the rapes brought shame to the family. Rather than giving her justice, a Saudi court sentenced her to be lashed ninety times because she had met a man alone who was not related to her.[58]

This was far from an isolated case. "In 2004, a sixteen-year-old girl, Atefeh Rajabi, was hanged in a public square in Iran. Her crime? Rajabi was charged with adultery -- which probably means she was raped. Her rapist was not executed. Rajabi told the mullah-judge, Haji Rezaii, the he ought to punish men who rape, not their victims." The judge both sentenced and personally hanged Rajabi because, in addition to her crime, he said

that she had "a sharp tongue."[59]

Time magazine reported in 2004 that in Iraq, "a 16-year-old girl named Rana who was raped by her neighbor last April in the city of Nasiriyah. When her family discovered that she was no longer a virgin, her brother decided to kill her. A cousin who was aware of the plan took Rana to a nearby Italian military base; she was later moved to Baghdad and finally to a secret location farther north. Having fled her family, she is unlikely ever to return home."

Several high-profile cases in Nigeria recently have also revolved around rape accusations being transformed by Islamic authorities into charges of fornication.[60] A seventeen-year-old Nigerian girl named Bariya Ibrahim Magazu, for instance, was sentenced to one hundred lashes for fornication after she was discovered to be pregnant. She accused several men of possibly being the father; when they all denied having had relations with her, she received an additional eighty lashes for false witness.[61] Islamic law restricts the validity of a woman's testimony, particularly in cases involving sexual immorality. And Islamic legal theorists have limited it even farther, in the words of one Muslim legal manual, to "cases involving property, or transactions dealing with property, such as sales."[62] In other judicial areas only men can testify. It is virtually impossible, therefore, to prove rape in lands that follow these *Sharia* provisions. If the required male witnesses can't be found to exonerate her (four men who testify to seeing the actual crime, according to the Koran), the victim's charge of rape can become an admission of adultery. That accounts for the grim fact that as many as seventy-five percent of the women in prison in Pakistan are, in fact, behind bars for the crime of having been raped.[63]

It is important to realize that such attitudes and behaviors which characterize Islamic gender apartheid have penetrated

the West. There has been numerous reports of Muslim men raping women in Scandinavia and Australia. Their horrendous actions have been justified by imams. In September 2006, Australia's most senior Muslim cleric Sheikh Taj el-Din al-Hilali, in a clear reference to the notorious Sydney gang rapists, said in the sermon: "It is she who takes off her clothes, shortens them, flirts, puts on make-up and powder and takes to the streets, God protect us, dallying. "If I came across a rape crime - kidnap and violation of honor - I would discipline the man and order that the woman be arrested and jailed for life. If she had not left the meat uncovered, the cat wouldn't have snatched it."

What must be understood is this: Any independent action taken by an Arab or Muslim girl or woman is perceived as intrinsically "sexual," "immoral," and "dishonorable." If she wants to attend college, refuses to marry a first cousin, chooses a love match, tries to elope, leaves her religion, converts to another religion--she runs the risk of being murdered in a highly eroticized way by woman-hating male mobs.

Honor Killing

There is no sanction in the Koran or Islamic law for honor killing. However, the practice is in fact encouraged by the shame/honor culture that Islam has created. A transgression against the moral law code is seen in many Muslim countries not as a sin to be somehow expiated by the individual who committed it, but as a blot upon this individual's family, whose members often feel an obligation to kill her as a way of restoring their honor. In 2003, even the Parliament of relatively moderate Jordan voted down a provision designed to stiffen penalties for honor killings. According to *Al-Jazeera*, "Islamists and conservatives said the laws violated religious traditions and would destroy families

and values."[64] According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "On May 31, 1994, Kifaya Husayn, a 16-year-old Jordanian girl, was lashed to a chair by her 32-year-old brother. He gave her a drink of water and told her to recite an Islamic prayer. Then he slashed her throat. Immediately afterward, he ran out into the street, waving the bloody knife and crying, 'I have killed my sister to cleanse my honor.' Kifaya's crime? She was raped by another brother, a 21-year-old man. Her judge and jury? Her own uncles, who convinced her eldest brother that Kifaya was too much of a disgrace to the family honor to be allowed to live." The court that prosecuted Kifaya Husayn's brother showed how much they valued his sister's life: he was given fifteen years in prison, which was later reduced to seven.

According to *Time* magazine, in September 2003 in Iraq "Ali Jasib Mushiji, 17, shot his mother and half brother because he suspected them of having an affair and killed his 4-year-old sister because he thought she was their child. Sitting in a jail cell in the Baghdad slum of Sadr City, he says he wiped out his family to cleanse its shame."

The same report also recounts that "last November, Qadisiyah Misad, 16, ran away from her family's home on the outskirts of Baghdad. Within days, one of her brothers and a cousin tracked her down on a city street and hauled her back home. According to Essam Wafik al-Jadr, the judge who prosecuted the case, one of Misad's brothers cornered his teenage sister in the living room; he then drew a pistol and shot several bullets into her. 'The parents requested that the brothers kill her,' says al-Jadr, who learned of the killing when Misad's body turned up in Baghdad's city morgue. He decided to prosecute the brother for an honor killing. The punishment hardly fit the crime: Misad's brother received a year in jail, and al-Jadr is not even certain he is still incarcerated, since he was eligible for parole within a few months of his conviction."

And also: "Last month a Baghdad coroner reported the death of Mouna Adnan Habib, 32, a mother of two, who had been delivered to the city morgue with five bullets in her chest. Habib's left hand had been cut off — a practice common in honor killings, in which men amputate the woman's left hand or index finger to display as proof to tribal leaders and relatives that the deed has been done. In Habib's case, relatives suspected her of having an affair. 'They saw her talking to a man a few times,' said al-Jadr, whose staff investigated the case. Local police have told al-Jadr that they believe Habib was killed by her nephew rather than her husband but that they cannot find the man, who they say has not since returned to the family house."[65] These "honor killings" are distressingly common throughout the Muslim world.

"In 2001, in Gujar Khan, Pakistan, Zahida Perveen's husband attacked her, gouged out both her eyes, her nose, and her ears. He wrongly suspected her of adultery. He was arrested, but male relatives shook his hand and decided she 'must have deserved it' and that a 'husband has to do what a man has to do.'…In 2005, in Gaza, five masked members of Hamas…shot Yusra Azzumi, a twenty-year-old Palestinian woman, to death, brutalized her corpse, and savagely beat both her brother, Rami, and her fiancé, Ziad Zaranda, whom she was to marry within days. This self-appointed Morality Squad wrongly suspected Yusra (herself a Hamas member) of "immoral behavior."[66] A Palestinian Arab girl, Rofayda Qaoud, became pregnant in 2003 after her brothers raped her. Her mother then demanded she kill herself, and killed her when the girl refused. According to a news report: "Armed with a plastic bag, razor and wooden stick, Qaoud entered her sleeping daughter's room last Jan. 27. 'Tonight you die, Rofayda,' she told the girl, before wrapping the bag tightly around her head. Next, Qaoud sliced Rofayda's wrists, ignoring her muffled pleas of 'No, mother, no!' After

her daughter went limp, Qaoud struck her in the head with the stick. Killing her sixth-born child took 20 minutes, Qaoud tells a visitor through a stream of tears and cigarettes that she smokes in rapid succession. 'She killed me before I killed her,' says the 43-year-old mother of nine. 'I had to protect my children. This is the only way I could protect my family's honor.'"[67]

Like other violent practices directed at women, honor killings have also migrated to the West. For example, on January 8, 1999, in Cleveland, Ohio, a Palestinian woman, Methel Dayem, was murdered by two male cousins in what prosecutors termed an "honor killing." Her crime? She had refused to marry a first cousin, insisted on attending college, drove her own car, and was deemed "too independent." The fact that the prosecution had used the term "honor killing" led to the Muslim community to attack the prosecution as "inflammatory," "anti-Arab" and "anti-Islamic"--which in turn led to a bench trial, not a trial by jury. Despite enormous circumstantial evidence, the judge did not find that the prosecution proved its case beyond a "reasonable doubt."

In September 2006 in Ottawa, a young woman, Khatera Sadiqi, was shot dead at a shopping mall. Her fiancé, Feroz Mangal, was shot by the same gun and was in a coma. Police announced that her brother, Hasibullah Sadiqi, was their prime suspect. Mangal's father explained: "He wasn't happy because they were engaged."[68] In Birmingham, England in March 2006, two young men set fire to a house. They did so because the sister of one of them, a 15-year-old girl named Meherun Khanum, was dating a young man named Abdul Hamid, and her brother did not approve. Those who were in the house got out through windows, except for Abdul Hamid's six-year-old sister Alisha, who was severely burned and died shortly thereafter. The young Muslim men who were involved in the attack fled to Bangladesh.[69]

On February 7, 2005, Hatin Surucu made her way to a bus stop in the main Oberlandgarten Strasse in Berlin. Minutes later, a volley of pistol shots hit her; she died choking on her own blood. A bus driver discovered the body and called the police. Hatin's three brothers, aged eighteen to twenty-five, were arrested and formally charged with the murder. They pleaded not guilty. As of this writing, they are still awaiting trial.

It is important to note that in a Berlin high school class discussion about her murder, teenage Turkish male students said that Hatin "had only herself to blame" and that she "deserved what she got – the whore lived like a German."[70]

Conclusion

Female genital mutilation, daughter- and wife-beating, child and arranged marriage, polygamy, *purdah*, easy divorce for men, female sexual and domestic slavery, veiling, routine rape and gang-rape and honor killing—none of these are unique to Islam.

But no other ideology, religious or otherwise, sanctions and excuses them all in the way that Islam does. Women in Islamic societies suffer on a daily basis from these indignities, violations of their human rights, and acts of violence. Some of these human rights abuses are prosecuted in the West, although advocates of "multiculturalism" argue for their acceptance. In the Arab and Islamist-jihadic world these abuses are considered "normal" and justifiable "cultural" expressions of identity. Moreover, they are connected to the terrorist mentality. As Christina Hoff Sommers has written, "After all, the oppression of women is not an incidental feature of the societies that foster terrorism. It is a linchpin of the system of social control that *jihadists* are fighting to impose worldwide."

If western feminists and pro-woman progressives really mean what they say about the importance of women's freedom and independence, they must oppose Islamic gender apartheid. But for this to happen, western feminists must first understand that much of what they have been taught—and are teaching--about third world countries, about Islam, and about racism is false or exceedingly biased.

For example, Islamic gender apartheid is not caused by western imperialism, colonialism, or racism. It is indigenous to Islam both theologically and historically. The same is true of Islamic religious apartheid--namely, the practice in which Muslim countries do not tolerate the practice of any religion other than Islam and which actively persecutes, converts, taxes, exiles, or murders Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, etc.

Western feminists should also challenge the myth of widespread "Islamophobia" in the U.S. and the West. This is a fabrication; but Islamic hatred of Jews, Christians, and women really exists and is denied, minimized, and rationalized. Feminists must end their unnatural obsession with the so-called "occupation" of Palestine and focus on the occupation of women's bodies throughout the Muslim world. If they care about women, they must confront the issues that characterize Islamic gender apartheid and affect at least half a billion women in the Islamic world.

Western feminists should acknowledge that Islamist misogyny and *jihad* are not "caused" by Israeli or American foreign policy but by home-grown tyrants throughout the Muslim world, and by customs in which woman-hating and Islamic gender apartheid are religiously, regionally, and tribally justified.

Feminists realize that they will become increasingly irrelevant if they do not break free of their narcissistic obsession

with the trivial problems they find in American society and look to the Muslim world where women are violently oppressed in real time every day of their lives. Cristina Hoff Sommers again: "The women who constitute the American feminist establishment today are destined to play little role in the battle for Muslim women's rights. Preoccupied with their own imagined oppression, they can be of little help to others--especially family-centered Islamic feminists…. Their moral obtuseness leads many of them to regard helping Muslim women as 'colonialist' or as part of a 'hegemonic civilizing mission.'" It disqualifies them as participants in this moral fight.

Feminists and pro-woman progressives must jettison concepts such as "multi-cultural relativism" which has taken over the Women's' Studies and related disciplines. Pro-woman activists and thinkers must embrace a single standard of human rights for all peoples--not one for the West and another, more barbaric standard for the Islamic world.

Western feminists must understand that like women everywhere, Arab and Muslim women have internalized their culture's views. And therefore, they justify practices of which they are victims--wife-beating, *purdah*, polygamy, veiling, and above all, female genital mutilation. In America, in the 1960s, most women denied that they were economically discriminated against or, if proven wrong, insisted that it did not bother them. They blamed themselves entirely when they were sexually harassed, raped, or beaten. Only years of education and struggle have begun to change these attitudes among American women and men. If Western feminists are not committed to the same struggle for Islamic women they are guilty of hypocrisy.

Finally, Western feminists must support Muslim dissidents, both male and female, who are risking their lives in a battle for women's rights under Islam. As it is, leftwing feminism today has done quite the opposite-entering an unspoken alliance

with Islamists—*against women* and against their own feminist principles. Feminists must adopt a universal standard of human rights and abandon their loyalty to a multicultural relativism which justifies, even romanticizes, indigenous barbarism, totalitarian terrorism and the persecution of women, religious minorities, homosexuals, and intellectuals. Refusal to judge between civilization and backwardness, and between enlightened rationalism and theocratic fundamentalism endangers us and sinks the victims of Islamic tyranny deeper in their present hopelessness.

Footnotes:

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